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## Yahowa 13



Sonic Portation

(Prophase)

[www.prophasemusic.com](http://www.prophasemusic.com)

In late 2007 the publication of [The Source: The Untold Story of Father Yod, YaHoWa 13 and the Source Family](#) (Process Media) revealed for the first time the inner workings of early '70s cult commune the Source

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Family, founded by the charismatic Jim Baker, a/k/a Father Yod. The group came far closer to achieving the utopian ideals of similar collectives of the era - had the Source Family managed to supplant the Manson Family in the eyes of the media, perhaps the term "cult" wouldn't have had such negative connotations - and among music aficionados, Yod & Co. had the additional cachet of featuring an impressive house band that released ten LPs in its lifetime (and actually recorded scores more), many of them under the name YaHoWa 13, sometimes spelled Ya Ho Wha.

For the most part they were all private pressings, so they've become highly prized over the years by collectors of underground psychedelia and nascent freak-folk. It wasn't until 1998 when Japan's Captain Trip label stepped up to compile the bulk of those recordings (including unreleased material) in an elaborately-designed, limited-edition 13 (natch) CD box set, *God and Hair*, that the general public was even made aware of the Source Family and YaHoWa 13. More recently the all-digital Anthology label began reissuing some of the albums as well, so with *The Source* book also serving to revive the YaHoWa 13 name, the next logical step was for some of the erstwhile band members to get back together for some performances

That they did in November of 2007 for several West Coast shows ([the Los Angeles Times said](#) that the band "makes Devendra Banhart look like Don Rumsfeld," further comparing their tribal trance-rock to Animal Collective and Soft Circle), which was followed in April 2008 by a concert at NYC's Knitting Factory. Call it a long overdue coda to the shuttering of the hippie dream. And as these things happen, in rock 'n' roll there are always additional codas - hence the CD at hand. *Sonic Portation* features original Ya Ho Wa 13 members Octavius Aquarian (drums, percussion), Sunflower Aquarian (bass) and DJin Aquarian (guitars), now going by the slightly more streamlined Yahowa 13, and its creation was born of serendipity: two days of studio time were donated free of charge to the band, and when it came time to mix the tapes, through connections stemming from one-time Source Family member Sky Saxon and Ya Ho Wa 13 fan Billy Corgan, veteran drummer and producer Kerry Brown stepped up and volunteered to assume mixing duties.

The first thing you notice, particularly if you've heard any of the original seventies recordings, is how tight and disciplined the trio sounds. This is psychedelia rooted in the jam aesthetic, yes, and it's an understatement to say that Yahowa 13 gets suitably "out there" from time to time - isn't the whole point of psychedelia to strive for the musical equivalent of out-of-body experiences anyway? But where the old Ya Ho Wa 13 sometimes veered off into highly indulgent free-form wankery that could leave even the most dedicated student of psych frustrated (much of the blame for that could probably be laid at the feet of Father Yod, a

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non-musician who fancied himself a musician and vocalist), this contemporary incarnation really understands that if you're gonna set the controls for the heart of the sun, keep going until you reach the fiery source; don't take a detour around Uranus.

To that end, *Sonic Portation* is alight with such tuneful gems as "Raga Nova," thrumming slice of *motorik* rock which DJing describes in his delightfully extemporaneous liner notes as "a 'new' type of Raga" (but which you or I might simply feel free to file alongside our beloved Neu! Records); and "Traveling Ohm," powered by a relentless choogle rhythm and liberally spackled by shards of cosmic twang fretwork (pardon the less-than-cosmic comparison, but to me it suggests Creedence Clearwater Revival and Quicksilver Messenger Service jamming together). Even the lengthy 12-minute opening track "E Ah O Shin" is intensely focused despite progressing through a complex, suite-like arrangement, from the opening vocal chant (which resembles a Native American prayer) through an effects-strewn, dissonant midsection to the luminous, melodic, almost Savage Republic-like conclusion.

Thematically, of course, the members of Yahowa 13 have brought the Aquarian age tenets that initially nurtured them to the recording studio, although for the most part the record is instrumental with occasional vocal interjections; Djin's liners help outline the underlying philosophies embedded in their material. In that regard, listening to *Sonic Portation* - and it's strongly recommended that it be heard from to from start-to-finish - is akin to an extended sonic yoga lesson. Breathe in deeply, and then exhale very slowly, and at length. For despite numerous peaks and valleys in some very dynamic musical arrangements, this is ultimately one of the most relaxing, and therefore gratifying, musical travelogues I've heard in ages. Most reunions happen due to nostalgia, a need to care of unfinished business, or simply in order to cash in. Happily, the Yahowa 13 reunion happened for the best of reasons - for the brotherhood, and for the inherent spirituality of the music itself.

**Standout Tracks:** "Traveling Ohm," "Raga Nova," "The Big Kundalini"  
FRED MILLS





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### SXSW 2009

Hey punters,  
SXSW is in a  
month. Which of  
these rumored  
happenings are  
you looking  
forward to?

- DEVO's BMI showcase: 60-year olds with flowerpots on their heads!
- PJ Harvey and John Parish shamelessly hawking their new album.
- The Decemberists playing their new album in its (extremely long) entirety.
- Spinal Tap unveiling songs from their forthcoming new album.
- Any band featuring a ukulele player.